

The commission charged with trimming and consolidating the nation's military bases expected to submit its final report to the White House today, with Maryland likely to gain a significant job boost.

Fort Meade, Aberdeen Proving Ground and the National Naval Medical Center in Bethesda are slated to be the state's biggest gainers from the Base Realignment and Closure process, as more than 9,000 incoming personnel would be distributed among those and other installations in the state.

"The BRAC announcements have been great news for Maryland and the nation," Maryland Sen. Barbara A. Mikulski (D) of Baltimore said in a statement. "The recommendations are a testament to the strength of Maryland's military bases, our military and the communities that support them."

The federal commission planned to submit its report despite active lawsuits in other states attempting to block the commission's decisions from reaching President Bush. On Sept. 8, the Bush administration asked the Supreme Court to protect the BRAC decisions.

The suing states, including Massachusetts, Missouri and New Jersey, had key military bases marked for closure in the BRAC evaluation. Many jobs resulting from those changes will move to Maryland if the report is approved.

Overall, the base closures are aimed at eliminating 20 percent of the nation's defense infrastructure and using the projected \$7 billion in annual savings toward modernizing the armed forces.

Once he receives the report, Bush has until Sept. 23 to approve and send it to Congress or reject and send it back to the commission for revision, which would have to be completed by Oct. 20. He cannot make changes himself, but would then have until Nov. 7 to send the revised report to the Capitol. If he rejects the revisions, the process ends and no action is taken on the bases.

After the president approves the report, Congress has 45 days to decide whether to reject the recommendations. If 45 days pass without congressional action, the BRAC report goes into effect.

House Democratic Whip Steny H. Hoyer, who represents Maryland's 5th Congressional District, successfully fought to ensure that the Indian Head Naval Surface Warfare Center, in Charles County, and Patuxent River Naval Air Station, in St. Mary's County, survived this latest round of base closures.

"I am very pleased with the results of the BRAC process for Maryland and especially Southern Maryland as it continues to advance today to the White House," Hoyer (D-Dist. 5) of Mechanicsville said in a statement.